



***Pheidole* in the New World: A Dominant, Hyperdiverse Ant Genus**

By Edward O. Wilson

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Species of the genus *Pheidole* are the most abundant and diverse ants of the New World and range from the northern United States to Argentina. In this richly illustrated book, Edward O. Wilson untangles its classification for the first time, characterizing all 625 known species, 341 of which are new to science, and ordering them into 19 species groups. The author's keys and drawings, the latter showing complete body views arranged in the style of field books, allow rapid identification by anyone with an elementary understanding of entomology. In presenting all of *Pheidole*, the book covers one-fifth of the known ant species of the Western Hemisphere, including many of the commonest forms.

Wilson also summarizes our knowledge of the natural history of each species, much of it previously unpublished. In addition, he provides a general account of hyperdiversity, confirming that it is not a statistical artifact but a genuine biological phenomenon that can best be understood by detailed analyses of groups of organisms such as the *Pheidole* ants.

An important innovation in this book is the inclusion of a CD-ROM containing high-resolution digital images of the type specimens. The CD-ROM is designed to allow quick retrieval of information such as known range, group membership, measurements, and color. The CD-ROM thus will be useful in creating "instant" field guides, comparison charts, and local checklists.

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Editorial Review

Review

Edward O. Wilson, one of the great naturalists of our time, hatches big ideas from the study of very small creatures. His newest book, *Pheidole in the New World*, surveys a genus of ants whose complexity and evolutionary success are so extraordinary they have never before been fully described. (*Boston Globe* 2003-02-25)

For the most part [it is] very hard to visualize and explain the entirely different scale of species diversity that is encountered in the invertebrate world. Faced with an illustration and explanation such as Edward O. Wilson's *Pheidole in the New World*, we can only be stunned...Wilson's monograph is the product of a master craftsman. It reeks of authority. Opening sections explain anatomy, terminology and abbreviations. There are 100 pages of keys. Each one-page species treatment includes line drawings of the major and minor workers in lateral view, frontal views of the heads, and details of the thorax and petiole; the location of the type-specimens; the derivation of the name; diagnosis, measurements, colour, geographical range and biology. Here are 624 treatments--a gigantic undertaking. And there is more. The CD is a searchable database that can be used as an identification tool supplementary to the keys. Possible inputs are measurements, colour and country of origin. Or the user can scroll between closely related species and compare high-resolution colour images of the lateral views of major and minor workers and frontal views of heads. (Gaden S. Robinson *Times Literary Supplement* 2004-07-30)

About the Author

Edward O. Wilson is Pellegrino University Professor, Emeritus, at Harvard University. In addition to two Pulitzer Prizes (one of which he shares with Bert Hölldobler), Wilson has won many scientific awards, including the National Medal of Science and the Crafoord Prize of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences.

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